

Message Text

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USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAJ-01 NIC-01 OMB-01 DRC-01

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R 241750Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9928

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION BERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 01319

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WB, GW

SUBJECT: BUNDESTAG PRESIDUM MEETING IN BERLIN POSTPONED

REF: BONN 1130

SUMMARY: THE BUNDESTAG PRESIDUM MEETING ORIGINALLY ENVISAGED FOR JANUARY 28 IN WEST BERLIN (REFTEL) HAS BEEN POSTPONED BECAUSE OF ALLIED INABILITY TO RESPOND TO SOVIET PROTEST OF MEETING BY THAT DATE. THERE ARE DOUBTS ON UK SIDE AS TO LEGAL ABILITY OF BODY TO MEET IN WEST BERLIN UNLESS ITS ACTIVITIES ARE RELATED TO FRG-WEST BERLIN TIES. FEDERAL CHANCELLERY ALSO SEEMS DOUBTFUL ABOUT MEETING, PROBABLY OUT OF CONCERN THAT FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS MAY FURTHER BE STRAINED THEREBY. BONN GROUP CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER WILL CONTINUE AS SOON AS UK EMBASSY HAS LONDON'S VIEWS. END SUMMARY.

1. AT ITS JANUARY 23 MEETING, THE BUNDESTAG PRESIDUM DECIDED TO POSTPONE ITS SESSION PLANNED FOR JANUARY 28
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IN WEST BERLIN. BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT RENGERS OFFICE

HAD BEEN INFORMED BY THE FONOFF THAT THE ALLIES PREFERRED THIS COURSE BECAUSE THEY HAD NOT YET RESPONDED TO THE SOVIET PROTEST ABOUT THE MEETING.

2. IN ANNOUNCING THE POSTPONEMENT, WHICH HAS SO FAR RECEIVED NO PRESS PLAY, THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE SAID ONLY THAT IT HAD OCCURRED BECAUSE OF SCHEDULING DIFFICULTIES. AT THE SAME TIME, THE OFFICE TRANSMITTED TO THE FRG FONOFF A STATEMENT OF ITS VIEW THAT THE PRESIDUM ASSUMED BOTH IT AND THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS HAD THE RIGHT TO MEET IN WEST BERLIN AT ANY TIME.

3. THE FONOFF REP PASSED THE ALLIES THE ABOVE INFORMATION AT THE JANUARY 23 BONN GROUP MEETING. UK REP SAID HE WAS STILL UNABLE TO ENGAGE IN A DRAFTING EXERCISE FOR A REPLY TO THE SOVIETS SINCE HE WAS WITHOUT INSTRUCTIONS FROM LONDON. IT WAS AGREED TO PROCEED ONLY WHEN THE UK REP HAD LONDON'S VIEWS.

4. COMMENT: THE BRITISH HAVE, FOR REASONS WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND, CHOSEN TO VIEW THE PRESIDUM AND COUNCIL OF ELDERS AS ANALOGOUS TO BUNDESTAG COMMITTEES. THUS, IF THEY MEET IN WEST BERLIN UNDER THE TERMS OF THE BERLIN AGREEMENT, THE MEETINGS MUST BE CONNECTED WITH THE MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF WEST BERLIN-FRG TIES. THE UK FONOFF IS NOW PONDERING THE FRG ARGUMENTS, WHICH HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED BY THE US AND FRENCH, THAT THESE TWO BODIES DO NOT UNDER ANY STANDARD FALL INTO THE CATEGORY OF COMMITTEES OF THE BUNDESTAG.

5. THE ISSUE, WHILE ON THE SURFACE FAIRLY ABSTRUSE, COULD BE POLITICALLY LOADED. IF THE PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP OF ALL PARTIES CONSIDERS THAT THE ALLIES ARE INTERPRETING THE BERLIN AGREEMENT RESTRICTIVELY,

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 01319

POSSIBLY UNDER SOVIET PRESSURE, THERE IS THE PROSPECT OF A PUBLIC OUTCRY; THE FRG POLITICIANS WILL CERTAINLY TAKE THE PROBLEM TO THE PRESS. HOWEVER, THE CHANCES NOW SEEM THAT REASON WILL PREVAIL AND THAT THE BUNDESTAG LEADERSHIP WILL DECIDE TO PUT OFF THE PROPOSED PRESIDUM MEETING FOR SOME TIME, UNTIL THE ALLIED POSITION IS CLEARER AND THE FRG-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP SOMEWHAT EASIER THAN NOW.

6. A COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THAT THE FEDERAL CHANCELLERY ALSO FEELS THAT THIS IS A POOR TIME TO TRY TO RAM BUNDESTAG MEETINGS DOWN THE SOVIET THROAT, JUST WHEN FRG-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE ALREADY STRAINED OVER THE FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE'S ESTABLISHMENT IN WEST BERLIN. MINISTER BAHR TOLD THE ALLIED REPS JANUARY 22 THAT HE THOUGHT THE IDEA OF THE PRESIDUM MEETING IN WEST BERLIN A POOR ONE. BAHR'S POSITION HAS LED THE FRENCH EMBASSY TO QUESTION THE POLITICAL ADVISABILITY OF THE MEETING BEING HELD THERE NOW. BAHR WOULD OBVIOUSLY PREFER THE ALLIES TO BE THE ONES
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TO SAY NAY TO THE BUNDESTAG LEADERSHIP, THUS PUTTING THE REJECTION ON ALLIED RATHER THAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULDERS. WE ARE STRONGLY OPPOSED TO BEING PLACED IN THIS NO-WIN SITUATION.

7. WHILE WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT PUSH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTO HAVING THE PRESIDUM OR COUNCIL OF ELDERS MEETINGS IN WEST BERLIN NOW, WE FEEL THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE CLEAR OUR VIEW THAT THERE IS NOTHING IN THE BERLIN AGREEMENT THAT DOES NOT PERMIT SUCH MEETINGS. THIS IS THE LINE WE INTEND TO USE IN THE DRAFTING EXERCISE TO DRAW UP A RESPONSE TO THE

SOVIET PROTEST.
HILLENBRAND

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